

CutBank

Volume 1
Issue 77 *CutBank* 77

Article 42

Fall 2012

Scapegrace

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Recommended Citation

Downey, Jeff (2012) "Scapegrace," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 77 , Article 42.

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SCAPEGRACE

In another story over coffee, a mountain lion acquires
a taste for geese,
would eat only geese, terrorizing winter corn fields.

Instinct as a habit comparable to origin, the cuckoo lays its eggs
in the nest of a warbler,
a plot squaring off in eaves, in grocery bags, the green kind,
forgotten

or merely inopportune, hanging on a doorknob until the checker
makes sure
you know which hand handles the carton.

Eventually I'm going to grow and peddle flowers just to learn
their exchange.
Elapsed shelf-life somehow the mnemonic to beauty,

as when we went to buy a cigar for the dad who got us a room
at the casino
and found charming strip malls where dusty baseball caps
had failed to sell

across two unveiled logos. In this state, memory turns left
by following a jughandle.
Our first glimpse of the ocean was always only the bay. We fed
ice cubes to the tide,

brought the gulls closer, light signaling off limbs, neon
like a tennis ball stuck in a fence
which bends backward to guard an overpass.

You would have to really climb to commit suicide.
Yet to drift is to be locked in,

to feel at least some ease in this gimbal lantern,
land cleared by landlord,

where the harsher the light, the more aromatic our hair and skin.

Spring passes go.
Fields of alfalfa cured, thus occasioning breath.

The man from the shelter they call pomegranate hands—
not a nod to his pickpocketing,
but the iodine with which he treats his water—

proves there are sweeter drinks to be cut
with something bitter.

They say he owns one share Berkshire Hathaway
but won't sell,

would rather pass on, over, as everything salvageable
in the park next to the shelter,
every powerline insulator its original cobalt.

Remember the birdseye from choir? The one note held
to your discretion.
Church muting through a blanket pinched between pews
to form a tent.

In the actual woods someone has thrown a stopwatch and snorkel.
Not going back.

New to someone. New to denature.
Or, as the locksmith warns:

keep the receipt, new keys can be fussy.
New-wise. Old-wise.

The wise don't have eyes in their head.
They plant their feet

and proceed by blocking: a dramatic monologue,
stage bereft

of the world, how the Quakers have long chosen
thee and thou over you,

feeling its blurred singularity unsuited
to spiritual address.

To smile at an old head of garlic in the fruit bowl sprouting
or an infant in the roadhouse kitchen,

the line cook's child, whom no one minds,
who appears a vanishing point.